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ASIAN CITIES IN THE AGE OF GLOBALISATION: CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMBING THE VALUE CHAIN

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INTRODUCTION

I want to thank Arcasia for giving me so many opportunities over the years to articulate ideas on architecture and the conditions surrounding it. As everyone knows, date lines are essential to ensure that ideas do not remain in perpetual gestation.

Some of you have heard me, in the past, speak about the human condition, (2) the dynamics of noia and paranoia; of self in history, (3) on saturation and value-change, on architectural education and aesthetic dysfunction, on modernity and modernisation, (4) on the matrix of reality etc.

This forum has spurred me to gather all my thoughts together to centre on the subject of Asian urbanisation, modernisation and the politics and cultural dilemmas of modernity in our times and how these affect architecture and society. It will be a big effort to draw all the strands together, but I will try.

I am glad to be here in Bangladesh, home to the great invention of micro credit which has inspired all who vex over the seemingly impossible task of doing something for the poorest of the poor before the trickle down reaches them, if at all. It is a fine example of creative realism. Architects should be inspired by this. But like all humans we find it hard to apprehend reality. It slips away because we vacillate between myths of progress and myths about our traditions. Caught between the past and the future, everyday reality seems very mundane indeed, yet in fact, when we strip away the veil, reality can fill us with awe and wonder. In what ways is the past relevant today? What does catching up mean? What happens when we catch up? These are some of the salient questions I will try to address. But first the context.

THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

The world is in a curious state of crisis. (5) Early 21st century does not appear to be a flowering as hoped for. With 9/11, in fact, it looks like intensification of old unresolved issues come home to roost.

(6) When China, India and Islam were great and powerful, their ideas and art influenced all surrounding cultures. Today, the West is rich and powerful. Therefore, the Atlantic Alliance and the USA, extend their influence everywhere. Aesthetics takes from and reacts to their lead. Architecture is a lot of copy and adapt. Contrasted against the triumphal capitalism, the West stands for, is the spectre of terrorism and religious extremism. Vigorous emerging economies such as China, Korea and India view themselves and are viewed by the West as contenders in the global game. (7) Huntington postulates a "Clash of Civilisations". What ever it is, Asia wants to find its own voice, define its own modus operandi if it, too, is not to be torn apart by its own intolerant fringes and stand as equals in the world.

Social injustice needs development to right long-standing woes. (8) And so, cities are accepted as the engines of economic growth everywhere. China, Korea and some parts of India, despite the Western slow-down and Japan's stagnation are prime examples of such growth. Vietnam, Thailand are also getting ready for the big push. Success is measured by the size of the new middle class they create.

THE NEW MIDDLE CLASSES

Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan have indeed created large middle classes. (9) But the strange thing is that they are all in a state of limbo. Having caught up, they now cannot seem to get a new head of steam to get to the next phase. Why? While the middle classes are the cradle of liberal yet conservative culture, observation suggests that depending on which generation, the class displays different characteristics. Of course there are always individuals that do not fit the general class trend. And the characteristics blur across the lines. Nevertheless, (10) first generation middle classes can be characterised as frugal, realistic and practical. Theirs is an instrumental logic. Aesthetics to them is an instrument of economics, and art is but a sideshow. (11) Second generation middle classes tend towards kitsch. Unsure of their identity, they buy into status symbols avidly. The more obvious the icons, the better. (12) Third generation middle classes are problematic. They seek depth of values, they rebel against their parents and authority. They want to find authenticity, want meaning in life, (13) are at odds with conventional kitsch society. They are either extremely introspective and out of this may come genuine innovation, invention and self actualisation if conditions are right or else, they harbour rage in their hearts if they cannot realise their dreams. Thus, some of these take matters into their own hands and are even prepared to sacrifice their own lives for causes they have taken to heart. (14) Most, however, languish on the sidelines of life cynically nursing their hidden rage.

Transitional second and many third generation middle classes are subject to push and pull forces. The push forces are generated within themselves because of insecurity and grief. (15) The pull factors are induced by their narcissistic tendencies catered to and seduced by the consumerist and materialist culture; products of the development paradigm. (16) Should pleasurable anaesthetics that is kitsch fail to narcotise the disorientation induced by rapid change this will drive some individuals to be vulnerable in extremist causes. (17) Extremists thus become heroes to those cynics who stifle their rage. They admire those who have the gumption to take action however deluded this might be.

(18) Rage is ancient but in today's context, what is different is the availability of mass-kill weapons. If a new economics of scope for creativity can be fashioned, materially developed but stagnating societies may be able to rise to a whole new level and head off extremists in the process. Failing this, the rage multiplies. Since the end of WW2, this is the age of the third generation after all. We are in for a rough ride. This is thus the special context of our times. Modernisation, materialism and the third generation are colliding. This is the nexus. It is a crisis point in history. (19) In the Maslowian hierarchy of human needs there is concealed a terrible dimension. Self-actualisation is not necessarily benign. There is a dark side. Higher needs can also produce a malaise. When escape is seen only through giving vent to rage or through self-absorption, the world is in for a rough time.

(20) Aesthetics, is a neglected dimension. Being relegated to the decorative margins of thought and life it may hold some answers to this nexus. My reading of Islam is that it is primarily an aesthetic-religious practice. Its power is in its ability to encompass the whole individual through its sounds, rhythms and also its collective participation. Its insights, inspiration and aesthetic passion could well be the crucial dimension of itself to release the rage and the cynicism. But it needs a context of social justice and environmental justice. Theoretically, politics and society in the developing world should pay serious attention to aesthetics and integrate it into development. Failure of this generates kitsch and this in turn debases development. And so the rage continues. Aesthetics should now be theorised and incorporated into contemporary theory by students of development

and social change. Indeed, this is the area that now needs special attention especially in these troubled times.

AESTHETICS AND AESTHETIC DYSFUNCTION

As architects, aesthetics is naturally a key concern but the subject is problematic in many ways. While we vex over the aesthetic dysfunction all around us, we are paralysed. And so we privatise it and keep it to ourselves. (21) The dictum that one man's meat is another's poison has closed off the subject so badly that we cease to theorise it. And so, bad aesthetics goes unchecked. Worse, aesthetic dysfunction's societal cause and distorting human dimensions is unattended. Writing this paper I realise that aesthetics could well be the important new locus to discussing development, politics and culture. But we need to know specifically how aesthetics is linked to development, human development and modernity. Are there different manifestations at different stages of economic change and middle class formation? Indeed, is there a politics of aesthetics? I look for links in the belief that a whole new way of seeing reality can be revealed to inform our times. (22) To find the nexus that does not appear in conventional development theory one has to keenly observe society. This paper is an outline of such a search.

What is implied is a new look at epistemology in which aesthetics is recognised. (23) How are aesthetics and rationality parts of the spectrum of human consciousness? Ranging from sensation, to sense, to emotion, to code and finally to thought, how are these related? Would neglect in any one area affect the quality and scope of consciousness of other areas? My understanding is that full consciousness runs up and down the spectrum, while attaching and detaching cognition as necessary. Conscious control is premised as the faculties of apprehension and comprehension traverse from sensation, an automatic response, to sensing, to a primary evaluative consciousness of form to (24) feeling, with awareness of influences on spontaneous responses by socialised emotions, (25) to coding, which constitutes the world of semiotics and conventions and finally to (26) thinking, the ability to be analytical and synthetical that overarches every thing and which is extremely difficult but possible to be free from ideological presuppositions and assumptions embedded in class, ethnic and economic interests. This is the human potential and predicament of consciousness. Only a supreme self-confidence and an existential culture of autonomy can deliver the conditions suitable for such reflection, and dispassionate evaluation that leads to genuine perception. (27) Insofar as this is concerned, societies automate thought in the interest of predictability and social order. Without this social cohesion is in jeopardy. This is the inherent social condition in the politics of consciousness.

In the contemporary world the possibility exists for such autonomy. As life support improves, the urban economy evinces some real or illusory sense of security. (28) This is promised by the politics of modernisation. With it should come modernity. Modernity enables things and phenomena to be disaggregated or deconstructed and finally re-aggregated into new wholes. As such, it is possible to free up all the different aspects in the spectrum of consciousness, examine them and re-aggregate them at will and in whatever context necessary. This being the case, modernity allows primary, secondary and tertiary levels of the conscious to be developed and deployed consciously. The power to create is thus liberated and ideologies and demagogical appeal cannot get a grip on individual conscience and consciousness. (29) This is a new politics.

Thus, to liberate aesthetics from culture, we must be modern. In this, we can make a distinction between (30) taste, beauty and aesthetics. Beauty is a social construct. Taste is simply a person's preference. As such, it should be respected for what it is. Modern aesthetics, is an autonomous discipline. It would as such be considered as consciousness about the abstract properties of form bestowing upon it coherence and consistency irrespective of taste or beauty. Whether we like a style or expression is irrelevant. What is important is whether the form is intelligible, coherent and consistent. Then we can conduct a conversation across taste. We can be inclusive, permissive and liberal but in a principled manner. Having such a command of the grammar of form is therefore powerful. It enables individuals to cross taste boundaries, conventions and explore new territory, take it in, digest it, take it apart, re-aggregate it, transform it and situationalise it as need be. This

means that an individual with such a capability can freely address the specifics of his situation with confidence and competence. This is the way ahead, a whole New World!

DEFICIT MODERNITY AND POLITICAL AND CULTURAL LIMBO

The above is the conclusion of my delving into contemporary aesthetics for some time now. I think I now have got a grasp of it. (31) Thus I can say that dysfunction in aesthetics is linked to the phenomenon of deficit modernity. But then, what are the causes of such deficit? Is such deficit linked to the phenomenon of political limbo in countries such as Japan and Singapore? Why has modernity not developed in tandem with modernisation? (32) Was it deliberately de-coupled? This is the next challenge.

In embarking on such a probe, the terms; modernisation, modernism and modernity have all to be clarified. Modernisation should also be distinguished from Westernisation. This is a common error. Whereas, modernisation is merely the process of technology transfer and adoption of appropriate modern management methods, modernism is the stylistic expression associated with dominant contemporary styles which have their roots in an aesthetic derived from industrialism. But because too often, modernisation and modernism have been associated with Western mannerisms and styles, modernisation has for too long been used interchangeably with westernisation. Criticism of the International style and modernism as such is a criticism of the industrial aesthetic of the manufactured plane and panel as the primary module of architecture. Reactions to and further explorations of the industrial aesthetic have not gone far enough. They have not grasped the grammar. The attack on the embedded industrial aesthetic of modernism has missed targeted the thing. The freedom sought for contemporary expression is to be found in mastery of aesthetics as primary grammar and not in the manifestations of such grammar in what ever previous forms of expression. The issue is modernity and the development of a free consciousness the spans the full spectrum of consciousness including a highly developed consciousness of the properties of form as independent primary grammar.

MODERNITY

Modernity is entirely distinct from modernisation and modernism. Modernity is a culture of autonomy in which priority is given to (33) the autonomy of reason, aesthetics and morality as distinct areas of thought and sensibility free from power, piety and precedence. (34) While these have historical roots in the Italian City-State politics of the 16th Century and in the enlightenment, modernity is not exclusive to such history. For us it is important to know that indeed modernity is co existential, transactional and open.

(35) ASIAN MODERNITY

Stimulated by the thoughts of professors Dipesh Chakrabarty and Naoki Sakai I take heart in the idea that Asia has deep traditions which are very old but very modern. These are contained in (36) Zen Buddhist and Taoist thought and ideas. The kind of "openness" prior to conceptualisation mentioned by Chakrabarty is especially relevant. (37) When LaoTzu spoke of the "Tao", he referred to the existence of autonomous intrinsic qualities that defeat attempts at definition precisely because such categories lie prior to conceptualisation. In this way, Tao is aesthetically and cognitively very modern indeed. Buddhist distrust of thought is because of the parasitical nature of mind's dependence on precedents is also a very modern idea does not inhibit it from prioritising the rational as means of negotiating practical reality. Naoki's attack on the emanative theory of western modernity is elaborated by his insistence on the transactional nature of intercommunication and mutual comprehension. If modernity was so alien to Asia, how could there have been any communication? On the basis of these thoughts, it is thus entirely possible and reasonable to think of a modernity that is existential, inclusive and for that matter one which can encompass each and every cultural situation anywhere. Modernity is a condition of globalisation even if it is often obscured by modernisation.

(38) In as much as modernity is a state of consciousness wherein an individual has full and autonomous command of his or her intellectual, emotional and sense faculties, aesthetics can, as

well, be treated as an autonomous discipline that is free from power and piety. And especially as modernity just as Buddhism does in enabling comprehension prior to concept, it has inherently the power to precede codes and conventions which are the everyday content of life. As such, the possession of such modernity enables an aesthetic capability that can define and create coherent and consistent quality and form in whatever field needed without the aid of a prior model. This is power indeed.

(39) Furthermore, the prospect of realising, expressing and inventing new things and ideas arising from the stimulus provided by fresh Asian contexts; history and geography is thus vast. Modernity is of course more than the instrumentality this role implies. It is the mentality that opens up creative realism capacity. With the prospect of modernising Asia, and the expansion of modernity, the meaning of globalisation will take on a whole new significance. (40) The asymmetry of influence between East and West will finally come to an end only when Asia begins to contribute to world culture.

Still, lacking such autonomy, aesthetics in the catch-up phase, wanting to please power, wealth and orthodoxy is distorted by a host of factors including the existential anxiety of having to conform and catch-up to norms and conventional expectations. This piles on more cargo than the aesthetic vehicle can carry. Exaggeration in scale, message and emphasis is thus widespread. (41) This is of course magnified further by new-middle-class social and cultural insecurities which want **bigger, brighter, louder and more of everything**. (42) Professional marketing politics desperate to show difference to gain market share is expressed in unnecessary dramatics. Functional and technical aspects are neglected in the interest of cutting an image. (43) Ancient class and caste barriers that cause the disconnect between hand and mind remains unresolved.

THE EAST-WEST DILEMMA

The causes of aesthetic dysfunction are thus both systemic and human. (44) I attended an East/West wedding recently in a de-consecrated Christian church in Singapore. It was a wedding of a young couple, a Western groom and an Asian bride. The music; baroque; the décor and the proceedings aesthetically thoroughly consistent with a Western norm. The ambience was pure elegance in terms of Western taste. Here was total coherence. There was no need for content. It looked a Christian ceremony but it was not. It is a new dimension of the new Asian contemporary reality. The bride's vow was uttered not in demure fashion but a verbal punch into the air. Style, I was glad, did not subdue the untypical exuberance. Still, plurality of style imposes a tyranny of choice on the new middle classes in Asia and kitsch becomes normality. Exuberance, a rare occurrence is such a relief to witness.

And so there is some desperation that style compensates for repressed freedom and kitsch serves as necessary narcotic to dull consciousness. A somnolent consciousness is in any case an aid to the state's management of troublesome consciousness in its drive for modernisation. Modernisation without modernity results. The state thus becomes the unintended ultimate kitsch machine. Thus, Asia's new middle class urban generations live in a cosy hermetic shell made of a constructed past, to shore up identity shaken by rapid change, a pleasurable present and a believable future. The intended result of this kind of social engineering is to form the conviction that there is no need for deep change, only tweaking the system is sufficient. (45) This is the politics of consciousness.

(46) AUTHENTICITY

Older Arcasians know the loss of authenticity because they know a real past and had real dreams about the future. And so through the years, they have called for authenticity. Against the gathering kitsch, (47) Sumet Jumsai of Thailand spoke of recovering the South East Asian Aquatic culture as the basis of an authentic aesthetic of place. He sought an underlying theme to give coherence and significance to the modernising cultures of South East Asia lost in the maelstrom of kitsch. (48) His robot building was to take the Mickey out of worshipping the machine. (49) Charles Corea, of India, spoke for many when he said that he felt a sense of healing as he heard Sumet's words. (50) Robi Sularto of Indonesia spoke of turning to cosmology to find authenticity. He gave the example

of Balinese cosmological coherence and the role of the "Udangi", master of ceremonies, wise person, architect and choreographer of life in his bid for wholeness. (51) Zaigam Jaffery of Pakistan's call for the "barefoot architect" also struck a chord with everyone who has a social conscience. (52) Kazuo Iwamura of Japan urged working with the community to make architecture relevant and empower people. (53) Ken Yeang of Malaysia heroically markets the tropical look; a gesture to tropicalism attempting to gate-crash the architecture media monopoly of the West. But all the ideas and issues of the earlier generation have remained lingering at the edges of the mind, unresolved and impossible to bring to the centre stage of everyday reality in the deluge of globalisation and the dictates of catching up. (54) Singapore's William Lim consistently asserts that design is all about hybridity and plurality, while true to life nowadays, his "creative rebellion" is disconnected from the dilemmas of Asian history and thus emphasises style and stance which unintentionally promotes enslavement to the fashion mills of the West.

(55) DEVELOPMENT: TRANSITIONING FROM S1 TO S2 ECONOMICS

Having related aesthetics to modernity, we must now relate it to modernisation and thus development. Modernisation is the tool for development. S1 economics and politics stresses hard work, diligence, application, discipline and a culture of unquestioning obedience. S2 economics is quite different. It is based on creativity and questioning in order to find new ideas. (56) S1 politics intensely dislikes S2 politics.

(57) Development can thus be seen as a series of "S" curves with each curve representing a phase of change and economic transformation leading onto the next. (58) The change is a combination of generational changes and technological and sources of new materials. Here is where politics is really, the tool of economics taking control of emerging human and technological factors. Politics therefore deals with human consciousness, raising it, shaping it or suppressing it, are its stocks-in-trade.

(59) Singapore is as pure a case as it gets. It did everything right is S1 economics and politics. Lacking any strong culture and being small, it enabled the design of its politics to specifically target economic development in a way larger and more complex societies cannot. In larger and more complex societies, S1 economics is perpetrated by a politics that is a lot more diverse than that in Singapore. (60) And so, the trajectory of S1 economics in such countries after independence grew by fits and starts and took a lot longer than it took in Singapore. The poor, with all the richness of culture just have to wait longer for the benefits they need.

Understood as matching politics cuts through ideological semantics and political rhetoric, politics is seen simply as agent of economics. No attempt is here to exonerate political excessive repression as there is no attempt here to discuss the merits and demerits of the politics as such. While noted, it is sad but true that individual human costs are usually measured against gains and losses to society as a whole in the sweep of history. (61) Private pain remains private till there is a shift of politics to a more humane plane. Such is the prospect of a matching politics to an S2 economics premised on human creativity and the primacy of the individual.

In Singapore, there was such a total match between the politics and the economics but having succeeded so well on the "S1" curve; the politics is loath to change. The administrative system, fine tuned to a "T" is boxed into mandate boundaries and procedures that cannot easily deal with non-fit situations and bridge mandates. The system is not designed for individuals. The average standard is what the system is designed for. And so having reached the point of contra flexure, the match between politics and economics is now less clear. The transition has thus become problematic. There may actually be a miss-match.

(62) Theorising the transition from S1 to S2 is crucial not just for Singapore. How countries like Singapore achieve or not achieve the shift has broad implications. The western democratic model derived from a different history and a different milieu, while appealing to the sense of freedom

says little on how the transition can actually be managed. Democracy without milieu is problematic. Asia has to find its own way unique to its history and its milieu.

(63) Architecturally the developments in the S1 period reflect the dynamics of the catch-up mindset set by economics. This is predicated on copying and adapting images and styles from the West. (64) The so-called "creative rebellion" in design is restricted to superficials. There was no need for 'real' innovation. Indeed, innovation was systemically discouraged through the rules, regulations and administrative procedures and the demands for superficial images of progress. The politics and economics of catching up with the West dictated everything. The "administrative state" saw to it that resources are not 'squandered' on experimentation called, "reinventing the wheel". (65) Thus, virtually all of Singapore's major landmark buildings erected during the "S1" phase, were designed by foreign architects, eminent or otherwise. Development of local talent took a back seat to achieving the images of progress. (66) By examining why and how Modernisation, Modernity and Westernisation have been conflated will reveal the dynamics of value formation and indicate grounds for possible change. (67) What is the architecture of S2 economics?

(68) CATCH-UP AND TAKE OFF, TWO DISTINCT PHASES

Most Asian states and cities are still in the throes of catching-up. This largely explains their architecture. Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore have caught up but may have delayed too long in changing their political cultures to address the next phase up the value chain. It takes tremendous prescience and political courage to make timely moves to engender new mindsets. (69) This is why there is no symptomatic architecture of the new. Why the masses continue to elect the incumbent powers overwhelmingly baffles Western observers just as why the same old tired architecture gets built. The West has no answers as to how pent-up creativity in the Asian milieu can be set free. (70) Because they have seen how Asian talent blossoms in Western Universities and jobs they think that democracy can be exported. They fail to understand that democracy cannot be transplanted because milieu cannot be transplanted. Solutions to creativity in Asia have to grow from the specifics of the social and political soil. Risks have to be taken to initiate milieu change. (71) The challenge is therefore placed at the feet of those who ought to know their own societies and cultures best.

Meanwhile, just as Asian political culture is moribund, and so, (72) the morphology of Asian cities and their architecture is frozen. Characteristically the CBD is of concrete, aluminium and glass towers trying to look 'modern' Western. This is surrounded by kitsch condos and roman villas for the delectation of their new middle classes ensconced in their cosy make-belief world of gated communities. The countryside meanwhile slogs away. (73) Farm workers drift to the cities, the shanties continue to grow. The entry of global capitalism previously restricted by China and resisted by India is just starting to gather momentum. (74) Previously Asian roosts for Western capital suddenly find themselves sidelined by the vastly more lucrative opportunities in China and India as they embark on the path to the market economy global style. The results are already plain to see. (75) Chinese cities are becoming gigantic kitsch machines as were Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Bangkok and Manila! And there is a discernible pattern among them. Because they share the same underlying dynamics, the results show similarities. (76) Catch-up economics and politics after all, generate the same culture. Loss of heritage through the blind import of foreign icons badly mimicked erode traditions. Kitsch and aesthetic dysfunction occupy the foreground of all cities.

(77) TOWARDS A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF CULTURE

There is no conveyor belt of history. If anything, new historiography has taught us that the accumulation of minutiae that make up the matrix of everyday reality constitute the field in which the future is made by autocatalytic probes and selection pressures acting on reality as it unfolds and creates new forms. The unintended and the unplanned somehow form part of the new reality. (78) The unplanned interaction between hierarchies and matrices in terms of top down and bottom up dynamics may result in new social and political paradigms. In like manner, the top down architecture has also to anticipate a bottom up approach. New social and cultural realities are

substance in the making of a new future. Many suspect that the future is no longer mono-linear. It is polymorphic.

How will the polymorphic reality sit with an Asian milieu, which has been shaped by an (79) Asian political-culture constituted as a scaled-up version of the patriarchal authoritarian family model? What will happen to this when it collides with the new demands of S2 economics and its unintended effects?

(80) Thus far, the criterion of politics in Asia is not democracy or autonomy but paternalism, benevolent, competent or otherwise. Paternalistic Asian administrations abrogate to themselves all ideas and knowledge. This has a dampening effect on a free flow of ideas. People's self-confidence is ground down while the prestige of the government goes ever higher. People with bold ideas keep their thoughts to themselves and governments rely on a decreasing trusted circle exclusively; it is hardly a way to deal with highly complex situations in a world of uncertainty and heightened competition. There is thus, in Singapore, a democracy without the need of democrats, a modernisation without modernity and taste without aesthetics. All this will change under the impact of S2 economics.

(81) THE SINGAPORE CASE

The human spirit triumphs over adversity but I have learnt that it is defenceless against the presence of plenty. Faced with wealth, internal human drives shrink. If one is to have any optimism, one must believe that the human spirit has only temporarily withdrawn and not simply withered away. There has to be faith if efforts are to be made to reach the presumed wellspring in the recesses of the human spirit. Current pragmatic politics does not have such a faith in human beings. It is in danger of becoming a self fulfilling prophecy.

Once catch-up was achieved, and the economy arrived at the take off stage, it faltered. The state got rooted in earth-bound policies and practices. (82) It now cannot fly. For Singapore this is serious. Lacking resources and space, such states must either fly or die. (83) Yet Singapore has all along reacted well to crisis; it may yet again pull off this one, this time. (84) But this time there are great philosophical chasms to leap across.

(85) Unlike worker bees genetically programmed for specific roles, human effort has to be socialised to achieve defined and definable goals. (86) Culture is its destiny. When goals are no longer given but require good questions, courage, creativity, imagination, empathy and insight to define and invent new tasks, the human-worker-bees socialised for conformity are at a loss. But humans are not bees and should not be anticipated as such. A different politics with a different imagination of social and psychological possibilities is wanted. Singapore's leaders are extremely intelligent. (87) My question is do they have the will and gumption to reshape the politics and jettison outmoded philosophies even if it is at their own cost measured in terms of their monopoly on power?

(88) DILEMMA OF SINGAPORE'S POLITICS

Given that the total monopoly of power in Singapore by the ruling party and its administration has wiped the political slate so clean, it has to be expected that no alternative credible political capacity exists capable to actualise anything at any significant scale. Thus, only self-induced political change can shift from the current stalemate to something new. In the totally hostile political environment designed for political monopoly of the incumbent, the incumbent must now rise above hubris to change the patterns of power of themselves or risk everything they created and achieved.

And so, new S2 economics demands that the incumbent liberate the creative juices of the people. To do this they have to modernise the consciousness of the people. They cannot do this by exhortation. They have to offer experiential opportunities for new learning and new action. People have to take direct personal and collective initiative to shape the circumstance of their own lives by

themselves within an enabling context. To those who say rightly that freedom can never be given, the rejoinder is that the attainment of such autonomy through direct social action is not an easy path. It is fraught with intense contradictions and resisted by habituated negativism. The administration has to be re-made from its rationing role to that of facilitator. Any such effort will be a trial of leadership at every level to induce bottom up development and negotiate with top down structures. This is the only practicable step to induce modernity, autonomy and therefore creativity among the people long withheld that can avoid public bickering taken as new politics.

(89) FROM THE GROUND UP: CATALYSING A NEW MINDSET FOR S2 ECONOMICS

I argue that incumbent politics has no choice but to change. Globalisation demands that economies climb the value chain as others catch up. This is "S2" economics. To ensure that change is planned is important. It seems a contradiction but freedom cannot come about of itself. It has to be done by defining new goals and contexts but by deliberately withdrawing the hand of government in order to share power with intelligent and dedicated non-government individuals so that they can independently organise with the community to fulfil new needs even if this might mean that such individuals may ultimately seek power themselves. To this, I say there is nothing wrong in this. It is just what healthy politics ought to be like.

A new program of human capacity-building should occur simultaneously. At the political level, there must first be will to devolve power. This requires a high-level policy decision. This is the leap across the huge existing philosophical chasm. (90) People should be encouraged to build their own homes, appoint their own architects, build or alter existing housing estates, start community schools, build their own health facilities all involving the community but led by proven civil society activists and architects. This need not be an overturning of the paternalistic model of government, it is a new partnership. Here is the challenge for political innovation.

(91) The task of new leadership is to breed new leadership. This way, in time a whole new culture will come about. Resources which would otherwise have been allocated to development budgets in different ministries should be reallocated to facilitate people-based projects. (92) Real action in social space rather than confrontational sloganeering is the better way to build human and societal capacity. The making of a new political culture cannot be separate from achieving S2 economics. There is no choice. The following are some suggestions which form possible key program areas for social, political and economic activation.

(93) CAMPUS CITIES: SPARK PLUGS FOR A NEW FUTURE

Universities should be transformed into new-culture zones. Being well accepted by society as locations for learning, universities are the best sites for the kind of change envisaged. These places will be full-blown centres wherein creative and talented individuals can learn, create and shape a new creative culture. These will become microcosms of the new up-to-date Asian world ready for the needed take off economy.

(94) Imagine an Asian Campus City concept that turns existing universities into zones for learning, living, working and recreating. Autonomy is the key in this. There could be a range in the degree of autonomy. Autonomy can range from one end of the spectrum, that is, an extra-territorial campus-city which enacts its own rules and regulations to a campus with academic autonomy and freedom only. What ever it is, the move will give a tremendous boost to intellectual and creative life if it is implemented. The idea can also be implemented in any suitable location anywhere in Asia. (95) Those who provide the attractive environment where there is autonomy for intellectual and cultural free-space will attract the bright and talented. Let there be choice and competition. The fruits of such a project will be an incredible output of ideas and inventions which will lift the spirits of society already suitably prepared through the experience of co-design projects already accomplished. (96) Once Asia embarks on this path, globalisation takes on a whole new meaning.

Such campus cities are also enterprise zones. The co-location of businesses, manufacturing plants and culture and research facilities and public institutes add to the diversity of influences and

stimulation to create a vibrant new modern Asian culture. A high residential component for faculty and students ensures 24hour activity.

(97) In the information age, knowledge is everywhere; information is secondary to the quality of the question. Quality questions come from quality minds and hearts. (98) Shantiniketan, the school (99) Tagore founded emphasised farming, music, dance and culture within a spirit of improvisation yet it produced 3 Nobel Laureate, one in literature, another in astro-physics and recently one in economics.

(100) TRANSFORMING THE WORK CULTURE: THE SKUNKWORKS MODEL

Just as in education, revolution in the workplace is also called for. In design and proto-typing workshops especially relevant in the upper reaches of the value chain, connecting the hand and the mind also applies. In design schools and design offices, design work and fabrication processes should be adjacent to each other. The workspace should thus be a single integrated space wherein, everyone irrespective of rank or class works collaboratively. The designers would work and communicate closely with the craftsman fabricators. Intellectually, they would share the excitement of the project and learn from each other. (101) This is the highly successful "Skunkworks" pioneered by Kelly Johnson of the Lockheed Advance Aeronautical Company of the USA. If our architecture schools adopt and adapt this model successfully, the next generation of architects will be very different from the present generations in that design and technical advancement will go hand in hand and attain important break-throughs.

Innovation for integrated workplace planning is an important area for multidisciplinary interaction with potentials for increased productivity. Synergy in human resource management is definitely a 21st century task.

(102) CO-HOUSING, CO-DESIGN: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

For architects and civil society, co-housing is a natural area to provide leadership. Here is where civil society can provide the leadership and expertise to facilitate the formation of authentic communities. Experience in Japan and Korea indicate the possibility of success. The already highly successful top-down public housing program should be discontinued and a bottom up approach adopted instead. Many small housing clusters should be enabled rather than few large ones. Each cluster would integrate a variety of local facilities. In one, there may be a primary school, in another a community centre, childcare facilities; the aged and even medical facilities can be integrated into the housing scheme. Imagine the possibility of developing trust in the community and what energies this can release. Trust arises from successful sharing. This is the formula for social cohesion. Every effort must be put into achieving success. Once proven, the techniques and methods can then be confidently replicated. Co-housing is perhaps the single most powerful instrument for social transformation.

(103) SHIFTING TO "PLAN B": TOWARDS THE NEXT INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Given the tectonic shifts in global economy, it is easy to be pessimistic. The fact is that west is ageing. The old buy less. As markets for Asian products, it is a shrinking market. Then there is China and India, growing at a tremendous pace, wanting to export. Growth in manufacturing is limited by effective demand for the goods produced. Growth must be matched by capacity to absorb. If the rest of Asia, African and Latin America cannot afford to buy then there will be a natural dampener on the growth strategist's expectations. But all this is old economy; plan A. (104) Plan A is premised on nature absorbing all the pollution humans generate. This is clearly reaching limits.

The new economy, (105) Plan B, is premised on addressing the mismatch between consumption and environmental degradation that is threatening the global system. Amory Lovins, in his seminal book, "Natural Capitalism" suggests that there will be a new upswing in demand because every Plan A technology and appliance has to be replaced. This means every car; every building has to be re-fitted, every waste recycled and every refrigerator replaced etc. This is a multi-trillion-dollar

economy. It is not out of the goodness of people's hearts alone that change will occur but because it makes good business sense to do so. Of course, this replacement process has to be powered by non-polluting energy sources, otherwise the gains will be lost and so some say it is hydrogen. If Lovins vision is correct, indeed, a new economic and environmental miracle is in the making.

CONCLUSION

The Singapore crisis is not restricted to Singapore. It is a precursor for all Asian countries. (106) As they climb the value chain they will have to confront their own age-old taboos and conventions and their politics. There is no escape. Change is a great opportunity to review outdated Asian values and to update them in the context of the globalisation sweeping the world. Asia can define its own agenda and this will be rooted in the transformation of its human resource strategy. Material culture is but manifestations of this. If Asia is to free itself from internal and external domination, it has to link development with human development. Timing is important. The moment is now. (107) The mind and the hand must not anymore be compartmentalised. The western model is based on its specific historical conditions. In Asia, modernity can come about through design. Successful modernisation is a pre-requisite to allow individuals to develop autonomy. Then, democracy will be rooted in the Asian context. (108) Aesthetic dysfunction is an indicator of political stultification and human underdevelopment. It can be addressed only in the context of modern human development learnt experientially. All these things can happen through a change in the political imagination of the incumbent. Political risks must be undertaken by the incumbents. But new reality has to be built from the ground up with the agreement and structure provided from above. A new politics is implied. A new compact between power politics, civil society and everyday life has to be formed. Architects can and must join in the intellectual, educational and political quest for a Modern New Asia. (109)